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Foundations of writing

**Anorexia and Bulimia Disorder: Is the Media really to blame?**

**Abstract:**

Overtime Eating disorders have been becoming a worldwide epidemic. The two most prevalent eating disorders are Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa. Research shows that the rises of eating disorders in young girls are results of body image in the media. However, this article will present factors other than the media that may be bigger causes of eating disorders in young girls.

**Problem Statement:**

It seems that the media is at fault for negatively influencing young girls, causing them to become unhealthy by promoting Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa disorder. Although, that statement is just an assumption, is the media to blame or is it our society’s fault for obtaining what the media produces? Consider the idea that eating disorders are ways to try and cope with distress. If our society’s morals and standards were set higher, then body images in the media would not affect young girls as significantly as they do.

Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are better known as just anorexia and bulimia disorder. They are two different, but very common types of eating disorders. They both are very extreme ways to reach ones unhealthy weight loss goals. Anorexia is the lack of consuming the proper amounts of food; victims eat very little until they stop eating in all. Victims of anorexia becoming extremely thin. Bulimia on the other hand is the occurrences of secretly eating extreme amounts of foods followed by inappropriate methods of weight control (Stöppler). The Health and Social Care Information Centre has stated in the year 2012 that hospital admissions for eating disorders were on arise (York). With the percentage of about 20, eating disorders were ranked the highest for mortality rates for any mental illness (York).

**Lit Review:**

Some researchers have suggested that the fashion designers, models, singers, actress and other celebrities are at fault for encouraging eating disorders. Young girls can access the internet for pro-anorexic and bulimic cites that provide support for managing an unhealthy weight (York). It is believed that seeing incredibly thin models used every day promotes the wrong ideas to young girls. These models advertise all hottest trends and styles, swaying young girls to believe that they have to acquire that same body image. Even American’s favorite doll is a negative influence. It has been estimated that Mattel’s Barbie doll is selling two dolls per second (Kalodner 2). However research finds that if Barbie were an actual person she would be five feet nine inches, 110 pounds, with the body mass index of 16.2 (Kalodner 2). Any body mass index of fewer than 18.5 is considered to be underweight.

Other examples are Karl Lagerfeld, head designer and creative director for the clothing and accessory line Chanel. Lagerfeld did an interview exceedingly defending thin models. Instead of just giving admiration to thinner models he insulted the people who are concerned about them. Lagerfeld made many impolite comments, one being "dreams and illusions, and no one wants to see round women," (Hintz5). Other designers like Marc Jacobs, unapologetically includes underage models that seem to suffer from eating disorders in his collection (Givhan).

**Proposal Response**:

This evidence does prove that the media is using inappropriate methods to showcase advertisements. However, this prior research assumes that viewers are easily influenced. The media may contribute to negatively influencing young girls to seek for weight loss and a better body image. However, if society was more aware of the severity of anorexia and bulimia then more girls would be less drawn to the disorders. To prove this I will disuses how anorexia and bulimia are extreme psychological disorders. Next I will show that there are many figures in the media take these disorders as serious issues, and lastly I will discuss the morals and standards for young girls in our society.

**Framework: Psychological Disorders**

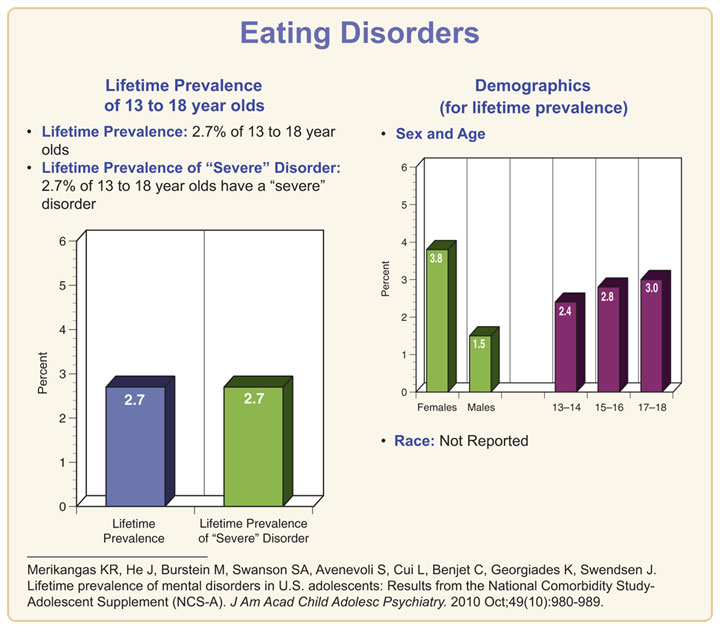
According to the American Psychology Association, “Psychologists play a vital role in the successful treatment of eating disorders and are integral members of the multidisciplinary team that may be required to provide patient care.” Most victims of eating disorders need the expertise of psychologists. Their job normally is to “help the patient replace destructive thoughts and behaviors with more positive ones,” (Brownell). Victims of eating disorders undergo higher rates of mental disorders than people without them; these mental disorders include depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse (Brownell). It has been proven that 50 to 75 percent of all victims of eating disorders have a history of major depressive disorder (Woolsey 16). In the figure below National Institute of Mental Health shows that 2.7 percent of victims have a lifetime prevalence of the disorders. Victims of anorexia and bulimia disorder go through emotional distress, and may have had their distress before going through the disorder.

Figure 1: "Eating Disorders Among Children." *NIMH RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Apr. 2013.

**Casework: Media Views and Society’s Standards**

All known victims of anorexia and bulimia have admitted that dealing with the disorders is an extremely hard experience. Even celebrity victims have confessed that recovery from the disorders is an unpleasant journey. Some examples are Princess Diana who says "I had bulimia for a number of years. And that's like a secret disease. You inflict it upon yourself because your self-esteem is at low ebb, and you don't think you're worthy or valuable. You fill your stomach up four or five times a day some do it more and it gives you a feeling of comfort. It's like having a pair of arms around you, but it's temporarily, temporary. Then you're disgusted at the bloatedness of your stomach, and then you bring it all up again. And it's a repetitive pattern, which is very destructive to yourself,"(Celebrities). Others include Nicole Scherzinger lead singer of the girl group the Pussycat Dolls. Nicole states she hated herself, she also felt disgusted and embarrassed (Stransky).

Another much known victim of anorexia is supermodel Ana Carolina. Unfortunately Carolina’s road to recovery was not a successful one. The disorder defeated her and took her life at only 21 years old. After realizing supermodels worldwide were losing their lives due to eating disorders bans and pledges started taking place. One of the biggest pledges was Vogues 6 solid written agreements. 19 editors and chiefs from vogue can together and made this agreement:

“1. We will not knowingly work with models under the age of 16 or who appear to have an eating disorder. We will work with models who, in our view, are healthy and help to promote a healthy body image

2. We will ask agents not to knowingly send us underage girls and casting directors to check IDs when casting shoots, shows and campaigns.

3. We will help to structure mentoring programmers where more mature models are able to give advice and guidance to younger girls, and we will help to raise industry-wide awareness through education, as has been integral to the Council of Fashion Designers of America Health Initiative.

4. We will encourage producers to create healthy backstage working conditions, including healthy food options and a respect for privacy. We will encourage casting agents not to keep models unreasonably late.

5. We encourage designers to consider the consequences of unrealistically small sample sizes of their clothing, which limits the range of women who can be photographed in their clothes, and encourages the use of extremely thin models.

6. We will be ambassadors for the message of healthy body image.”(Roff).

Many supermodels were pleased with this pledge. Supermodel Trya banks stated in many interviews that she was amazed with Vogue’s pledge.

The self-esteem of victims of the disorders is extremely low. Victims constantly obsess over their body image. However, there is a difference and wanting to improve your body image and obsession over it. There is nothing wrong with wanting to go to the gym and wanting to try out a diet, as long as your goal is to stay healthy. It is when a person’s self-esteem is extremely low that they fall into the hands of eating disorders. Studies show that self-esteem can come from a parent. In reality some children are raise with parents who compliment them, hearing things like you’re beautiful, and you’re smart, whereas other children are not. Dr. Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, a professor of psychology at Yale, states there is evidence showing that kids with at least one supportive adult who shares with them positive sayings are avenues for expressing the positive sides of themselves (cite). Also research shows “most people are highly motivated to believe the best of themselves, and subtly or not so, they look for feedback from others to confirm these good feelings. But someone who's depressed will go out and seek negative feedback, verifying her own thoughts,” (). This could mean some of the young girls influenced by the media could already have negative feelings towards themselves.

Research shows that majority of young supermodels travel abroad on their own. Before the death of supermodel Ana Carolina, she was traveling and working without the supervision of her mother. Carolina did not receive comfort from her mom when she was told she was to fat. However, when supermodel Trya Banks was told she was too fat to model for a fashion line her mother was there to support her. It was Trya’s mother who then found her work where she was accepted for her size. Mothers and daughters should talk about body image. Parents talk to kids and being above the influence and staying away from things like drug, sex and alcohol. There should be more discussion about self-esteem and personal standards. Guidance from a parent can easily help prevent the negative influences of body image in the media.

**Conclusion**

Studies show that the media is the blame for corrupting young girls and influencing anorexia and bulimia disorder. However, if society was more aware of the severity of the disorders then body image in the media would not have such an impact on young girls. People need to be more aware about some factors that come along with the disorders. Eating disorders are not serious physiological issues. This has a huge impact on the victims of the disorders. Also, there are some positive influences in media that spread concern and awareness about the disorder. Lastly, the morals, beliefs and self-esteem of young girls play a part in the negative influence. Young girls should talk about their feelings and beliefs. They should be giving proper praise to build self-confidence. In conclusion the media is not to blame as a whole we can make a difference.